

Syllabus

Visual Stories: Local & the Global
WCL 4396, Fall 2009

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We are constantly surrounded by images. They may be real people, altered people (enhanced or made ugly by Photoshop), or animated characters we see in films or video games. Humans are impressed by what they see. Listening to information or description does not impress the same credibility if we don't see an image or a written text that proves to us *something* really exists. Oftentimes, we are led to believe that something is factual by seeing an image that shows a certain type of attitude or perspective. This is because images, photographs, paintings, tells us stories.

Using the fantastic backdrop of Houston (the global city) we will take advantage of what is before us and journey out into the community, seeing “a story” about people/families/women/men/children, immigrants who have come to live here and have brought a rich history and heritage with them from some other part of the world.

For those interested in a more specific “gender” perspective, students may choose only women (or men) to photograph and write about.

After spending a few weeks analyzing the “stories” in photographs, each student will make a decision regarding how they want to represent Global Houston. The photographs taken every week will be brought to class (in computer files) and will be discussed with the professor and other students. The students will choose a group of 10 photographs and write an accompanying text or “story” that will enhance the message presented by the images.

This class will focus on photographing, writing and discussion. To this end you will be required to write 500 words every week in your class journal, documenting your progress in the class, your experience finding, photographing, and interviewing your subjects.

Goals for the course:

1. Understand how the photographic image affects people's perceptions.
2. Enhance writing skills and critical thinking.
3. Understand the significance of a transnational perspective in an urban environment.
4. Increase technological skills with constructing an on-line photo essay with text.
5. Develop an interdisciplinary perspective regarding the importance of culture.

6. Develop specific knowledge about one particular diasporic community in Houston.

Assignments:

Course Journal, 12 entries, 500 words each

Final Project - Photographic Essay, completed with Text, installed in web page and/or exhibition space with other student's work.

Grading Breakdown

Course Journal	30%
Final Photography Project	35%
Attendance –	30%
total	100%

Readings:

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida* (selections)

Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text* (selections)

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*

Cartier-Bresson, Henri. *The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers*

Edwards, Elizabeth. *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*, (selections)

King, Thomas, *The Truth About Stories* (selections)

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography* (selections)

Schedule

Week 1

Part I Documentary, "Ways of Seeing"

Week 2

Part II Documentary, "Ways of Seeing," on your own (on Blackboard)

Reading: Book *Ways of Seeing*, pages 1-80

Journal #1 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 3

Part III Documentary, "Ways of Seeing," on your own (on Blackboard)

Reading: Book *Ways of Seeing*, pages 81 to end

Decision made on what community/theme to photograph

Journal #2 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 4

Part IV Documentary, "Ways of Seeing," on your own

Reading: Book *On Photography*, pages 1-84

Bring 10 photographs to class- Begin Interviews

Journal #3 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 5

Reading: Book *On Photography*, pages 85-183
Bring 10 photographs to class, continue interviewing
Journal #4 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 6

Reading: Book *Camera Lucida*, pages 1-19
Journal #5 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 7

Reading: Book *Anthropology & Photography*, pages 74-95
Bring 10 photographs to class, continue interviewing
Journal #6 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 8

Reading: Book *The Mind's Eye*, Intro, Chapter 1
Bring 10 photographs to class, continue interviewing
Journal #7 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 9

Reading: Book *About Looking*, pages 1-84
Bring 10 photographs to class, continue interviewing
Journal #8 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 10

Reading: Book *About Looking*, pages 85-177
Begin Final Selection
Journal #9 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 11

Reading: Book *The Truth About Stories*, pages 1-30
Continue Final Selection
Journal #10 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 12

Reading: Book *The Truth About Stories*, pages 121-167
Begin adding text
Journal #11 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 13

Reading: Book *Image, Music, Text*, pages 115-68
Continue working on text
Journal #12 500 words, through Turn It In

Week 14

Bring photos and text to class
Journal #13 500 words through Turn It In

Week 15

Bring photos and text to class, continued
Journal #14 words through Turn It In

Week 15

Final Project Due